

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are requested.

Applicant appreciates the Interview granted by Examiner Omgba Essama to Meera Narasimhan on February 17, 2010.

No claims have been amended above.

The following reiterates the arguments presented at the Interview.

Claims 15-26 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over AAPA (Applicant's Admitted Prior Art pages 1-5) in view fo Spangenberg et al. (U.S. Patent 6,817,857).

The Examiner relies on AAPA, pages 1-5 of the present specification, as teaching most of the claimed invention. The Examiner then admits that "... AAPA does not disclose the top plate including reinforcing ribs o its underside and a mounting flange for fastening flange..." (office action, page 2). The Examiner therefore relies on Spangenberg as teaching all the missing features.

However, Spangenberg is part of the AAPA and is discussed extensively on pages 1-2 of the present specification. The Examiner's rejection therefore can be summed up as:

"Claims 15-26 are rejected over AAPA - Spangenberg (U.S. Publication 2002/0098258) - in view of Spangenberg (U.S. Patent 6,817,857 which is the same as the publication)."

The above does not comply with the requirements mandated by 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Moreover, Spangenberg is not available as a reference against Applicant's present invention. Spangenberg (same inventive entity) is the present Applicant's own prior device which was published less than one year (July 25, 2002) before the earliest effective priority date of the present application (July 4, 2003).

In any case, the present specification points out what is lacking in the Spangenberg reference and the problems inherent thereto. The present invention seeks to solve the problems of conventional devices by uniquely avoiding weld zones that are subject to stress related deterioration.

Nothing in any of the references of record describes, teaches, or suggests the features in claims 15-26. Therefore claims 15-26 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

CONCLUSION

Reconsideration and issuance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully,



James C. Wray, Reg. No. 22,693
Meera P. Narasimhan, Reg. No. 40,252
1493 Chain Bridge Road, Suite 300
McLean, Virginia 22101
Tel: (703) 442-4800
Fax: (703) 448-7397

February 22, 2010